

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 – 23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for slitting and merging ribbons from a preprinted paper web so that the ribbons can be superposed one on top of the other and synchronized to one another for simultaneous severing at a the single cutting station, said apparatus comprising:

- a. a slitting station where the paper web is slit into at least first and second ribbons,
- b. a turnbar roller for the first of said at least two ribbons, said turnbar roller angled to the downstream direction, and having said first ribbon wrapped around a substantial portion of the periphery of said turnbar roller for laterally shifting the first ribbon, whereby the first and second ribbons are superposed one above the other directly downstream of said slitting station,
- c. a ribbon drive station where rollers provide the tension required in said ribbons to draw the web and slit first and second ribbons in the same downstream direction, and
- d. a take up roller so arranged as to substantially duplicate the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first, wherein laterally adjacent portions of the paper web, formed into laterally adjacent portions of the first and second ribbons by the slitting station, are superposed one above the other for simultaneous cutting by a single cutting station positioned downstream of the turnbar roller and take up roller. where the super posed first and second ribbons are simultaneously cut, and
- e. ~~a take up roller so arranged as to substantially duplicate the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first.~~

25. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 24 wherein said drive station rollers associated with said ribbons comprise a master roller driven at a predetermined speed and associated with said first ribbon, and a slave roller driven at a predetermined speed equal to or greater than that of said master roller and associated with said second ribbon, said slave roller acting on said second ribbon for providing sufficient tension to advance said second ribbon around said take up rollers.

26. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 24 further characterized by an additional turnbar roller smaller in diameter than the first turnbar roller and associated with a third ribbon created at said slitting station, and take up rollers associated with said third ribbon for substantially duplicating the path length of the third ribbon relative to the first and second ribbons.

27-28. (Cancelled)

29. (New) The apparatus according to claim 24 wherein:

the take up roller comprises an upper take up roller positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon; and

the apparatus further comprises a lower take up roller lying forward of the upper take up roller and positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon, said second ribbon passing under the lower take up roller and extending around the upper take up roller, and said upper and lower take up rollers being biased apart for tensioning the second ribbon, wherein at least one of the upper take up roller and the lower take up roller is adjustable in a horizontal direction for adjusting the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first ribbon while minimizing the vertical height of the apparatus.

30. (New) An apparatus for slitting and merging ribbons from a preprinted paper web so that the ribbons can be superposed one on top of the other and synchronized to one another for simultaneous severing at a single cutting station, said apparatus comprising:

- a slitting station configured to slit the paper web into at least first and second ribbons;

- a turnbar roller angled with respect to a downstream direction of travel of the paper web, wherein the first ribbon is wrapped around the turnbar roller for laterally shifting the first ribbon, whereby the first and second ribbons are superposed one above the other downstream of said slitting station;

- a ribbon drive station configured to draw the web and first and second ribbons in the downstream direction of travel;

- a single cutting station configured to simultaneously cut the superposed first and second ribbons; and

- a take up mechanism positioned between the slitting station and cutting station for substantially duplicating the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first ribbon without lateral displacement of the second ribbon, said take up mechanism comprising:

 - an upper take up roller positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon; and

 - a lower take up roller lying forward of the upper take up roller and positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon and parallel to the upper take up roller, said second ribbon passing under the lower take up roller and extending around the upper take up roller, wherein the upper and lower take up rollers are biased apart for tensioning the second ribbon, and wherein at least one of the upper take up roller and the lower take up roller is adjustable in a horizontal direction for adjusting the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first ribbon while minimizing the vertical height of the apparatus.

31. (New) An apparatus for slitting and merging ribbons from a preprinted paper web so that the ribbons can be superposed one on top of the other and synchronized to one another for simultaneous severing at a single cutting station, said apparatus comprising:

- a slitting station configured to slit the paper web into at least first and second ribbons;

- a turnbar roller angled to the downstream direction and having said first ribbon wrapped around the turnbar roller for laterally shifting the first ribbon so that the first and second ribbons lie superposed one above the other downstream of the slitting station;

- a ribbon drive station configured to draw the web and first and second ribbons in the same downstream direction;

- a single cutting station configured to simultaneously cut the superposed first and second ribbons; and

- a take up roller positioned between the slitting station and cutting station and oriented perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon for substantially duplicating the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first, without lateral displacement or angling of the second ribbon along its path from the slitting station to the cutting station.